

FACT SHEET: *Accessibility Standards for Customer Service*

DID YOU KNOW?

Businesses in Ontario with at least one employee must offer **accessible customer service** by January 1, 2012.

WHAT IS ACCESSIBLE CUSTOMER SERVICE?

It is about two issues:

- Understanding that customers with disabilities may have different needs
- Finding the best way to help customers access your goods and services

DOES THIS LEGISLATION APPLY TO MY COMPANY?

This legislation applies to all people, businesses and organizations (public, non-profit and private) that:

- Provide goods or services either directly to the public or to other businesses or organizations
- Have one or more employees in Ontario

WHAT KINDS OF CHANGES WOULD MY COMPANY NEED TO MAKE?

There are 3 steps to take:

1. Read and learn the basics about the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA)*
 - <http://www.mcsc.gov.on.ca/en/mcsc/publications/accessibility/aoda2005.aspx>
2. Read and learn the basics about *Accessibility Standards for Customer Service*
 - <http://www.mcsc.gov.on.ca/en/mcsc/programs/accessibility/ComplyingStandards/guideToAccessibilityStandards/tableOfContents.aspx>
3. Meet the 10 requirements:
 - Develop customer service policies and procedures for serving people with disabilities.
 - Make sure that your policies and procedures are consistent with the principles of independence, dignity, integration and equality of opportunity.
 - Have a policy on allowing people to use their own assistive devices (e.g., cane, wheelchair, oxygen tank, etc.) to access your goods and services.
 - Communicate with a person with a disability in a manner that takes into account his or her disability.
 - Allow people with disabilities to be accompanied by their guide dog or service animal in areas of your business that are open to the public.
 - Permit people with disabilities who rely on a support person to bring that person with them while accessing your goods or services.
 - Where admission fees are charged, post information about what your policy is regarding what fee, if any, would be charged for a support person of a person with a disability.
 - If you offer facilities or services for people with disabilities (such as an elevator or accessible washroom), let people know when they are out of order.
 - Train your staff, volunteers and contractors to serve customers with disabilities.
 - Let customers with disabilities provide feedback on how you met their needs and establish a process to respond and take action on any complaints.

NOTE: *If you have 20 or more employees, you must also:*

- Complete an online report on your compliance by the reporting deadline
- Document in writing all of your policies/procedures on how you provide accessible customer service
- Notify customers that all of the documents required by the standard are available upon request
- When providing documents required under the standard, make sure the information is in a format that takes into account the person's disability

WHAT KINDS OF CHANGES WOULD MY COMPANY NEED TO MAKE?

Many companies assume the changes and accommodations needed to welcome all customers will be expensive and time-consuming. This is not always true! Although converting physical space to ensure accessibility might be costly, other changes are not. A few examples:

- Use larger print on flyers, customer documents, etc. for customers with low vision
- Describe/read aloud standards, return policies, receipts, etc. for customers with low/no vision
- Remove displays, other unnecessary items from narrow walkways/halls to allow for wheelchairs/walkers
- Increase lighting
- Allow customers to use their assistive devices
- Train staff to speak clearly
- Write information/answers for customers with hearing loss

WHO CAN I CONTACT WITH MY QUESTIONS?

Accessibility Directorate of Ontario

Phone: 1-866-515-2025

TTY: 416-325-3408 or 1-800-268-7095

Fax: 416-325-3407

Email: accessibility@css.gov.on.ca

Mail: Accessibility Directorate of Ontario
777 Bay Street, 6th Floor, Suite 601A
Toronto ON M7A 2J4

FREE Online Tools & Resources:

Find samples, a step-by-step process, and much more to help you and your company easily comply with the law, while doing better business for all your customers. Visit:

<http://www.mcass.gov.on.ca/en/mcass/programs/accessibility/ComplyingStandards/toolsToHelpYouComply.aspx>

This fact sheet is courtesy of **ableworks.ca**

ableworks.ca is a free job posting website and service that helps businesses in Hamilton, Niagara, Brant, Haldimand and Norfolk regions recruit, hire and train the right candidate who happens to have a **disability**. Let us help you with your recruiting or training needs. Please contact:

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Information for this fact sheet was gathered from the Ontario Ministry of Community & Social Services website:

<http://www.mcass.gov.on.ca/en/mcass/programs/accessibility/ComplyingStandards/index.aspx>

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